DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 256 063 EA 017 691

AUTHOR Furtwengler, Willis J.
TITLE Implementing Strategies for a School Effectiveness Program.
PUB DATE 85
NOTE 15p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of School Administrators (117th, Dallas, TX, March 8-11, 1985).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Administrator Role; *Change Strategies; *Educational Change; Educational Environment; Educational Research; Group Dynamics; Interpersonal Relationship; Leadership; *Program Effectiveness; *School Effectiveness; Secondary Education; Student Participation; Student Role; Teacher Role; Teamwork

ABSTRACT

Thirteen of 14 secondary schools increased their educational effectiveness by participating in a long-term, 12-step change process with two significant features: several measures were applied to develop a picture of each school's effectiveness, and student involvement in the process was considered essential. Schools were categorized by effectiveness using measures of socialized behavior, academic achievement, school culture and climate, and participation by teachers and students in voluntary activities. The 12-step process undertaken by the schools involved (1) acceptance of leadership responsibility by administrators, (20 appointment of a change team including teachers and administrators, (3) team review of school effectiveness, (4) appointment of a student leadership group, (5) planning for a leadership retreat, (6) participation in the retreat, (7) creation of task forces to address specific problems, (8) establishment of task force meeting agendas, (9) planning of inservice training, (10) documentation of changes in effectiveness, (11) establishment of annual leadership team elections, and (12) a year-end review. The school effectiveness program works primarily because it alters the informal social agreements made among students, teachers, and administrators about how members of each group are expected to act. This leads to new social agreements, norms, or understandings about priorities for the schools. (PGD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Anne L. Dees
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

AASA 1985

ED256063

EA 017 691

"Implementing Strategies for a School Effectiveness Program*." Willis J. Furtwengler, Peabody College of Vanderbilt University

This presentation will describe an educational change strategy which has yielded some promising results in improving and maintaining school effectiveness. My remarks will be directed to people who are interested in learning how to improve schools. I will attempt to answer three questions. First, how well does the change strategy work, or what are the results? Secondly, how does the strategy work? Lastly, why does it work?

First, how well does the change strategy work or what are the results?

For the past decade I have been a consultant on 121 school improvement projects. Many of these have required less than a week of my time, but several were of a longer duration. Eleven projects ranged from several weeks to six months. Fourteen projects were long-term projects much like the two Tennessee model school programs with which I am currently involved. These 14 school effectiveness projects ran between 12 and 36 months of consultation. The findings reported in this paper were dervied from these projects.

In the 121 school improvement projects, schools were placed in three different categories: those considered to be less effective schools, those considered to be moderately effective schools, and those classified as effective schools. Time will not permit a detailed explanation of classification system, but a summary can be

given of the multi-data sources and primary indicators used to categorize schools according to levels of effectiveness. First, the school's level of socialized behavior was determined by assessing the relative frequency and seriousness of discipline problems compared to other schools. Second, academic achievement as determined by scores on standardized tests and other indicators were used as a measure. A third set of indicators included measures of the school climate and school culture. These data were accumulated through the administration of the Climate Effectiveness Inventory,** and through interviews with administrators, teachers, and students at the school.

A fourth set of measures included the extent of involvement in the school--that is, the percentage of school personnel involved in activities for which they volunteered. For example, how many teachers were working beyond the minimal compliance level required by the contract, and how many students were involved in school activities beyond completing their required homework assignments? Other indicators which played a minor role in categorizing schools were the learning personality of the school, the levels of resource support from the community, and the leadership at the school.

Less effective schools were likely to have serious discipline problems, low academic achievement, a negative climate, little involvement in activities of the school, and a dependent learning personality. Interviews with faculty in less effective schools revealed a sense of quite desperation, a fear of being harmed, and a general feeling of hopelessness. Moderately effective schools were

characterized as having some discipline problems, average levels of academic achievement, a school climate which occasionally encouraged people to take responsibility for their actions, a moderate level of involvement with activities and a learning personality which stressed dependency on others in learning. In interviews, faculty would occasionally mention the potential of the school.

By contrast, effective schools had high levels of socialized behaviors, or few discipline problems. The academic achievement was usually above that of local and national norms, and the school's climate was positive. A large majority of the school's personnel including students were volunteers in activities and seemed accustomed to "going the extra mile." The learning personality of the school reflected aggressiveness toward learning and toward individual responsibility for learning.

The results of the extended school effectiveness program introduced in the schools showed improvement in all but one. The school which showed little sustained improvement dropped the program after the first year. Moderately effective schools improved, and the effective schools remained effective with some changes in levels of personal responsibility students felt for learning and managing the school or classroom. Fortunately, the schools categorized as less effective showed the most improvement. Some of the results of changes in the socialized behavior of the less effective schools were as follows:

Measures of socialized behaviors — Years

1. "School A" was a suburban high school of approximately 1000 students. It had a stable population of moderate to upper income families and a student mix of 65% black or other minority and 35% white.

	78-79	79-80	80-81
Suspensions (total days)	2068	1025	542
Suspensions (number of students)	170	152	126
Fights	N/A	90	66
Average daily attendance	86%	91%	94%

2. "School B" was an inner-city high school with a 97% black enrollment of approximately 850 students. The students who attended the school had lived in the neighborhood for most of their lives. The family incomes were among the lowest levels for this city.

	80-81	81-82
3-day suspensions	323	294
10-day suspensions	531	336
Average Daily Attendance	81%	86%

3. "School C" was a city high school with a population of approximately 1100 students, 55% white and 45% black. The family income was considered to be moderate for that city.

	80-81	81-82
Students referred to the office	2,258	543
Classes cut	9,248	2,766
3-day suspensions	337	61
10-day suspensions	124	36
Average daily attendance	81%	86%

4. "School D" was a city high school with an enrollment of approximately 1700 students. The population was approximately 20% minority. The average family income in the area was in the upper income brackets for that city.

	81-82	82-83
Suspensions	928	482
Truancies	594	261
Fights	87	68

5. "School E" was a junior high school with an approximate enrollment of 1300 students. The racial balance was approximately 65% white and 35% minority. The income for student families was in the middle range for families in this city.

Measures of socialized behaviors	81-82	82-83
Suspensions	336	200

Other measures of effectiveness using data from survey instruments and interviews were altered in positive directions. In summary, schools involved in the extended school effectiveness programs showed improvement in their school effectiveness. Because of these results and further testing of the school effectiveness

process now underway, the predictability of outcomes of the change process will improve.

Now, the question is, "how were these schools changed?" What were the change strategies which brought about changes in the less effective, moderately effective, and effective schools? Typical steps of the plan for increasing secondary school effectiveness can be identified. These steps, in the sequence in which they usually occur, are as follows:

1. Principals and vice-principals recognize their responsibility for the school's level of overall effectiveness. They accept their responsibility for determining how effective their school is and the role they must play in improving or maintaining school effectiveness.

2. A change team of 10 to 15 teachers and all of the administrators is appointed. The change team collects and reviews information about the conditions in the school. The school receives a "wellness report" on the effectiveness of the school.

3. The change team presents the wellness report to the faculty with its recommendations and plans for action to improve the school where necessary.

4. The change team appoints a leadership group of 50 to 100 students. The student group consists of the formal and informal student leaders in the school. Members of the student group are appointed after evaluating the recommendations of the faculty, students, administrators, and parents for the student leadership team.

5. A planning committee consisting of several members from the student group and the entire change team of faculty members plan for a three day retreat of leadership training and problem-solving activities.

6. The change team of teachers and administrators and the entire student leadership group of 50 to 100 students attend the retreat for leadership instruction and school problem solving activities.

7. At the retreat, change team members and student leaders join together to form the school's leadership team. This is subdivided according to member interest into a series of task forces to solve some of the school's specific problems. These task forces usually identify methods for involving large numbers of the student population in efforts to improve the school.

8. An executive committee of school's leadership team which attended the retreat holds regular meetings to establish agendas for four half-day meetings of the task forces. These meetings will be held during the school year to assess the progress of the task forces, and to rededicate themselves to the mission of improving the school.

9. The change team and other members of the faculty plan inservice training for faculty. The training is established in response to the needs of the staff for such training.

10. Changes in the school's effectiveness are documented as the school year progresses. These are presented by the task forces to the entire school leadership team and to both the remainder of the faculty and student body. Celebrations are held to recognize progress made.

11. The executive committee of the school's leadership team establishes a process for the annual election and appointment of new members to the school leadership team.

12. At the end of the school year, multiple source data are reviewed to determine the extent of the the year's achievements.

13. The cycle is repeated beginning again with step 2.

When one examines the steps in the change process they appear to be standard procedures for change except for two important difference. First, there is a reliance on putting information together from multiple sources to develop a picture of the school's level of effectiveness. Secondly, student involvement in the change process is considered essential for effective change to occur. In secondary schools, both formal and informal leaders are involved in a school-wide change process.

The school effectiveness programs implemented in schools viewed students as a major untapped resource for school improvement. The nature of what student leaders became involved with seems to be important to the success of the program. In the extended school effectiveness programs, these students became involved in two major areas. First, they participated in training designed to help them understand leadership and organizations. Secondly, they identified school problems from their perspective and they proposed solutions for each problem. The most effective vehicle for the students' involvement has been the annual school retreat held prior to the start of each school year. The school effectiveness program depends heavily

on the involvement of formal and informal student leaders for its success.

It is evident from research on the extended school effectiveness program that the implementation time of its steps will vary according to the school's level of effectiveness. Briefly, effective schools focused on inservice to improve instruction and on an immediate increase in student involvement. These schools wanted an ongoing rotation of volunteers from the student body and faculty. Effective schools worked on their commitments to the mission of and vision for the school. Work with effective schools demonstrated that the steps in the change process can be implemented quickly, especially with regard to student involvement.

Moderately effective schools, on the other hand, were somewhat anxious about student involvement and were ready first for the further development of control procedures which would assure fairness, firmness, and consistency in dealing with students. It took a considerable amount of time to build the faculty's commitment to change and then to convince them that students were an untapped resource for effective schools.

Less effective schools were interested first and foremost in survial. It was necessary to spend at least six months developing a sense of cohesiveness among the faculty so that they felt secure enough to consider the possibility that students might have a positive contribution to make to the school. These schools concentrated on the development of a dependable order and structure which communicated to

both faculty and students that the announced system of rules and procedures works. In time, they were able to involve students in the management of the school, but only after they had their own sense of personal security intact. Inservice work with the entire faculty, therefore, should proceed the involvement of students in changing less effective schools.

Changes achieved through the school effectiveness program have improved schools. Why does it work?

The conceptual model for the change process is derived from the works of Brookover, Beady, Flood, Homans, Schweitzer, Wisenbaker (1979), Derr and Deal (1979). SEP is based on the assumption that educational organizations are dynamic social systems. Such systems are characterized as having interrelated inputs, processes, and outputs.

George C. Homans, was one of the first socialist to stress the interdependency of three elements of a social system. The three elements are: (1) the tasks the people perform, (2) the interactions that occur between people while performing those tasks, and (3) the sentiments or attitudes that develop between individuals in groups. In a school, teaching and learning events are the "tasks" performed in Homan's terms. These tasks require cooperative efforts or interactions between teachers and students. Many interactions to accomplish these tasks also involve student to student interactions. As the interactions occur, norms or social agreements similar to "sentiments" are established. These norms dictate the behaviors

students and teachers are expected to exhibit in of school situations. The greater the attraction of members toward each other, the more powerful the norms in controlling group behavior.

The school is one large group made up of a number of smaller groups with classes being the one predominant form of smaller groups. Small groups, when bonded together through interaction with one another, can act in unison with norms to which each of the groups adhere. It is when the school acts together as one large group with norms that are reflective of the positive aims of the school that school effectiveness increases.

The process of establishing both classroom and school norms is explained further by Newcomb, Turner, and Converse (1965) and Homans (1950). Newcomb et al. argue that the attraction people feel for each other is related to the number of personal interactions they share. That is, the more people interact, the more they develop positive attitudes, or sentiments, towards each other.

Through the retreat process in the school effectiveness program, student leaders, teachers, and administrators develop more positive attitudes toward each as the interaction occurs. The more they like each other, the more they want to interact until, finally, some equilibrium is reached Homans (1950). As the members of the group interact they become more alike in their activities and attitudes. During the interaction, norms are established that specify how members of the group are expected to behave under a variety of different circumstances. The more attracted the members of the group are to

each other the more cohesive the group. When cohesiveness within a group is high, the group has less difficulty in getting members to conform to group norms.

Norms which are established through the school effectiveness program appear to be powerful driving forces for either high or low achievement and for mature or immature behavior in schools. Certainly, they are directly related to the release of human energy to achieve specific group or individual aims.

The reason the school effectiveness program works is primarily because it alters the social agreements that students, teachers, and administrators make about how members in each group are expected to act. The retreat involving student leaders usually leads to new social agreements, norms, or understandings about priorities for the schools, the desired behaviors people should exhibit, and the ways the group will act collectively. The basis for the conceptual framework for school effectiveness program involving students is a different model of change in schools. As work proceeds with schools, refinements in the framework will be sought, and more answers to questions about implementation strategies will be developed.

In summary, I have addressed and answered three questions. What were the results of the change process with extented school effectiveness programs? The process seemed to improve schools, and to maintain effective schools. How does the process work? It works through the collection and use of information about a school's effectiveness and through the involvement of formal and informal

student leaders. Why does it work? Because people are create new social agreements or norms to which they adhere when they act. The School Effecti eness Progr m provides hope for those responsible for school effectiveness, and I believe the role that student leaders can and should play in the school effectiveness movement has been overlooked for too many years.

*This paper contains excepts from the author's manuscript to be published. The author has given the convention conveners permission to publish these remarks in their report on the conference. Any other reproduction must conform to standard copyright laws.

**The CEI is an inventory developed by the author which measures seven factors related to school climate. It is published by the Research and Service Institute, Suite 233, 2 Maryland Farms, Brentwood, TN 37027. For more information about the school effectiveness program look for fall journal publications and a book to be published January 1, 1986, or write to the Research and Service Institute (615-377-3217).

References

Brookover, W., Beady, C., Flood, P., Schweitzer, J., & Wisenbaker, J. (1979). School social systems and student achievement. Brooklyn, New York: J. F. Bergin Publishers, Inc.

Derr, C. & Deal, T. (1979). Toward a contingency theory of change in education: organizational structure, processes, and symbolism. In E. King (Ed.), Education for uncertainty (pp. 39-70). London: Sage Publications.

Homans, G. C., (1950). The human group. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc.

Newcomb, T., Turner, R., & Converse, P. (1965). Social psychology. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc.